about 1928-29

Rancho Santa Ana

BOTANIC GARDEN

- of the -

Native Plants of California

Established in Memory of
JOHN W. BIXBY, Pioneer

MRS. SUSANNA BIXBY BRYANT
(MRS. ERNEST A. BRYANT)
OWNER AND BUSINESS DIRECTOR

ERNEST A. BRYANT, JR., SECRETARY

EXECUTIVE OFFICE
3210 WEST ADAMS STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

. . . Purpose . . .

For the enjoyment of the descendants of the Pioneers in whom a love for our beautiful foothill ranges is forever ingrained: for the pleasure of all those to whom the Santa Ana Cañon is a cañon of exquisite beauty which should be preserved for the future, and for those who not only will wish to enjoy but to study, assembled in one accessible locality, our native California plants which grow wild in such riotous profusion throughout the length and breadth of the State of California.

Since 1809, when the first Spanish Grant to "Santiago de Santa Ana" was secured by Bernardo Yorba, the holdings now known as "Rancho Santa Ana" have belonged to only two families: The Yorbas, from 1809 to 1875 and to John W. Bixby and his heirs since the latter date. To the original grant Bernardo Yorba added the adjoining "Canada de Santa Ana" and renamed his properties "Rancho Cajon de Santa Ana." Mr. Bixby added more acreage and named the whole "Rancho Santa Ana." This is an interesting bit of California land grant history, for so few of the old or original ranches, in this "new" and rapidly-changing West, have remained intact in the hands of two pioneer families over so long a period as 120 years.

On a mesa about 200 feet above the river (at an elevation of 650 feet above sea level), and commanding magnificent views of the narrow, wooded gorge of the Santa Ana Cañon, with mount San Jacinto visible in the far distance, stands what will be the administration building—an adobe house whose bricks were made by old-time Mexicans on the ranch. It is at present the private country home of the Bryant family, containing the fire-proof Herbarium now open on request to interested visitors and later to go into the Garden Foundation.

A Board of Trustees of which Mr. Allen L. Chickering, of San Francisco is chairman, has been selected; and an endowment fund is in the making, the interest of which will be used for the maintenance of this Botanic Garden which will be open to the public by card of invitation on certain week days during the year, as soon as sufficient planting is done to attract visitors.

The income from ranch orchards and other products has been spent for garden development for the past three years and will doubtless be used for this purpose until a Library Building is added to the present administrative group, a complete irrigation system installed, and all other permanent improvements completed, and a sufficient endowment fund established to carry on the program outlined.

The original planting plan for trees and shrubs was made by Mr. Ernest Braunton, at the suggestion of Doctor Charles Sprague Sargent, for many years director of the Arnold Arboretum. A plan for the planting around the house has just been completed by Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted; well known to us first for his achievements as a landscape architect in Boston, then to Californians for the landscaping at Palos Verdes Estates, and more recently for his splendid work in our California State park survey and report.

From the inception of the plan Mr. E. R. Johnson, Superintendent of Rancho Santa Ana, himself an amateur botanist, and Mr. Byron D. Stark, the nurseryman, have given more than an outsider can appreciate of their time, interest, and enthusiasm to develop Mrs. Bryant's project and they are largely responsible for the successful start already made in practical accomplishment.

The purposes of the Garden are many—and new objectives to be striven for will present themselves to the executives as the years go by and the program unfolds before us; therefore any attempt to enumerate our activities will be very incomplete at the outset.

To begin with, however, our primary object is to preserve our native California flora, try to replenish the depleted supply of some of our rarest plants, and bring together in a comparatively small space as complete a collection of our rich store of native California plants as can be made to grow in this southern section of the State. We estimate we should be successful with from 70% to 80% of our 7000 native species of plant life.

Then we hope to raise sufficient quantities of medicinal herbs and pollen-bearing plants to be used extensively in the cure of Hay Fever, and alleviation of suffering in Asthma and other allied diseases.

Interesting experiments will also be carried on to find the best varieties of our native trees, shrubs and flowering things to propagate for planting in small gardens, where, for a minimum of cost and upkeep, a nice assortment can be selected requiring little or no irrigation or fertilization.

On the ranch outside the confines of the Garden we shall establish experimental plots (10, 20 or 50 acres in each) for the growing of drought-resistant forage grasses for stock grazing; try out various kinds of native dry-land timber trees which might prove of commercial value if they could be grown successfully without water on our parched hillsides, and add to our supply of native flowering annuals and sun-loving perennials.

Our garden site has been carefully chosen to encompass as many different natural exposures and soil conditions as possible in order to facilitate the problem of furnishing proper environment for the enormous numbers of sun-loving, shade-loving, dry and moisture-loving plants as we collect them from districts where varied climatic conditions prevail.

Another contribution we hope to make to the public will be through the propagation of trees for County Highway planting, and gifts of nursery plants from our surplus stock to public parks, particularly to new parks in the smaller towns of Orange County.

With all these side issues we shall keep uppermost in our program the scientific value of a systematic Botanic Garden as planned, the importance of making a complete Herbarium collection, and will add constantly to the Botanical Library Foundation, to establish a library of constantly increasing value for the use and enjoyment of students and scholars.

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